(iii) Committee to review the progress made in use of Hindi

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA) : I beg to move :

> "That in pursuance of sub-section (2) of section 4 of the Official Languages Act, 1963, the Members of Lok Sabha do proceed to elect, in accordance with the system of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote, twenty members from among themselves to be members of the Committee to review the progress made in the use of Hindi for the official purposes of the Union and submit a report to the President making recommendations thereon in accordance with sub-section (3) of Section 4 of the said Act."

MR. SPEAKER : The question is .

> "That in pursuance of sub-section (2) of section 4 of the Official Languages Act, 1963, the Members of Lok Sabha do proceed to elect, in accordance with the system of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote, twenty members from among themselves to be members of the Committee to review the progress made in the use of Hindi for the official purposes of the Union and submit a report to the President making recommendations thereon in accordance with sub-section (3) of Section 4 of the said Act."

The motion was adopted

12.03 hrs.

RE : QUESTION OF PROPRIETY OF PRE-BUDGET-HIKE IN ADMINISTERED PRICES OF PETROLEUM PRODUCTS

MR SPEAKER : Hon. Members, I have received a large number of notices of motions on the question of rise in the price of petroleum products. There are motion for adjournment, motions for calling attention, motions for short duration discussion. Now I will give the floor to the Leader of the Opposition.

(Interruptions)

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE (Dumdum): Sir, the Zero Hour should also be allowed .. *(Interruptions)*

MR SPEAKER . This is Zero Hour. We are on Zero Hour now.

(Interruptions)

SHRI RAMESH CHENNITHALA (Kottayam) : Sir, we have given notices for Zero Hour also ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : I know that. I have said that I have received a large number of notices for raising matters under rule 377, notices for Zero Hour and for adjournment on the same issue. So, we are discussing the same issue now.

(Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE (Lucknow) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I would like to raise an important matter which is related to the dignity of the House and glory of democracy. The Eleventh Lok Sabha has been constituted recently ...*(Interruptions)*

[English]

SHRI P.R. DASMUNSI (Howrah) : Sir, there is not simultaneous interpretation coming on the headphones; and there are a lot of disturbances also. You may kindly advise them...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : It is being checked now.

(Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the 11th Lok Sabha has recently been constituted ...*(Interruptions)* It is the first day of he first session

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN) : Just a minute sir...*(Interruptions)* Just a minute sir.

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE : The trains cannot run today.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : I would like to make a request to Kumari Mamta Banerjee that discussion has already started on the issue raised by her hence it would be better if she goes is back to her seat

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : No, no, Mr. Minister.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Please do not interrupt the proceedings. I have not permitted that.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : This is not the way. We cannot make a mockery of this House.

[Translation]

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : The discussion has already started...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to discuss about the dignity of the House.

However, if a woman M.P. is staging a dharana here, I fail to understand as to how the issue of dignity can be raised. If you permit me, I would like to make an appeal to Mamataji, Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is the first session of the 11th Lok Sabha and today is the first day. This Lok Sabha has come into being after the general election. The ruling party has changed, the new Government has taken over. Those who were in the opposition are the ruling party now. Those who were in the opposition a few days ago, where do they stand today, it is difficult to comprehend as yet ...*(Interruptions)*

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is the budget session. The Rail budget and the general budget will be presented. Budget is an important part of the Parliamentary procedure. The Government cannot impose any tax and it cannot spend any money without seeking the opinion of the elected representatives. Hence until the people are duly represented, the right to impose taxes cannot be granted. No taxation without representation is a very old and well-known principle of democracy. We received the Summons from the Hon'ble President on 25 June He had summoned both the Houses. It was stated therein that the session would commence from 10th July. The Government did not wait till 10th July. did not wait till today's sitting. The Government took action on the night of 2nd July.

It was around midnight, when I received a phone call from a journalist that the prices of Petrol have been hiked. The Prices of LPG are being increased by 30 percent, that of Nafta by 20 percent. The prices of Diesel had been increased by 30 percent which were lowered to 15 percent, even then there has been an increase of 15 percent There has been an increase of 30 percent in Kerosene wax prices and 10 percent in Aviation Fuel Prices. In all, a burden of Nine thousand and seven hundred crore rupees has been imposed on the people of the country merely through a Government order Is this not the mockery of the House? If the Government had waited till 10th, if it had put up the proposal today, heavens would have not fallen. We were hoping that since this is the new Government, it would function in a different manner. But only the faces have changed, the nature of the ruling party has not changed People have changed but the style of functioning remains the same who had advised them to impose such a burden even when the session had been sommoned. To impose such a heavy burden, is a different issue altogether. I am raising a question of propriety and I fail to comprehend how the M.Ps such as Shri Indrajit Gupta, Somnath Chatterjee, Ramoowaliaji who have been protesting against it all the time, have changed to such an extent after moving to the Treasury Benches. The old Government was censured for having made such a hike and Government deserved censure. However today the ruling party has changed. Those who were sitting on the opposition benches have moved to treasury benches and now is it all right to do so.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to remind the House that my friend Prof Madhu Dandavate had brought on Adjournment motion on a similar issue in 1986 and Shri somnath Chatterjee while participating in the debate had said and I quote :

[English]

> "Sir, as this House has been slighted and the people have been made victims of high rise of prices, it is our duty to censure this Government. A series of levies have been imposed on the common people of this country just on the eve of the Budget Session In the process, this august institution over which you are presiding today, Sir, has again been denigrated and decimated by a Government which seems to have lost all ability to govern and also to think rationally and even to speak coherently"

[Translation]

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE (Bolpur) : I liked that.

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE How will you justify this hike today

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA (Bankura) : I have not heard.

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE Please listen to what I have said earlier and then give your reply accordingly The state of affairs has worsened So far as the propriety of the House is concerned whether the Government changes or a new Government is constituted, it does not make any difference Such kind of behaviour should not be displayed what was the urgency of doing this in such a heavy burden has been imposed on the people of the country Transparency should be there is the darkness of the night, instead decisions are being taken in the darkness of the night

AN HON MEMBER : And that too at 12 o'clock in the night

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE . Very true It was 12 o'clock in the night

At that time what Shri Indrajit Gupta had said I would like to read out that portion also

[English]

> "I do not want to repeat many of the things which my colleagues have already said Firstly, no satisfactory answer has yet come from the spokesman on that side of the House as to why it was necessary to do

this trick behind the back of the Parliament. You may say that this is not a very big point but we consider it to be quite an important point. You could have done it after the Parliament assembled. You have got a huge majority here. You can pass anything you like; nobody is able to explain why it was necessary to do it just before Parliament Session"

[Translation]

Even Ramoowaliaji was not very far behind. Whatever he had said, I would like to quote that also

[English]

"First, I would like to remind the Government that though they may be having majority in the House, yet it is a common responsibility and they should at least consult the Opposition or the States..."

[Translation]

The states are also concerned with the administered prices.

[English]

In future prior to any hike in the prices if it is to be done out of Parliament

I know that Government would reply to it But I do not need Government s reply on the matter I am raising today, I am making an appeal to you. You are the Hon ble Speaker of this House You are the protector of the dignity and the Honour of the House This Matter has been raised many a time previously also The Presiding officers had warned the Government that such a behaviour should not be repeated I was under the impression that the Govt. has changed and a new Government has taken over Those who were in the Opposition, are sitting on the Treasury Branches, and they would not allow such mistakes I agree that there is deficit and I have constantly been warning about the amount of deficit in Petro the country would have to face. But is this the way to bridge the deficit? Could not the Government have waited for a few more days? Who fixed the time of midnight of 2nd July? Did the Government think about the dignity of the House?

Mr Speaker Sir, I have two demands-one is that you should condemn the Government for the improper action taken by it and you should ask the Government to give an assurance to the House that whatever has happened, should not have happened and would not happen in future Secondly, whatever hike has been made in an improper manner should be taken back You should put up the proposal in budget, in regular budget. Majority is with you but you cannot deceive the country and the Parliament by increasing the administered prices in this manner. I am raising only this very aspect and am not going into its merits or demerits. Adjournment Motion is a different issue altogether. I am not discussing that for the time being. I am raising a question of propriety. I want your ruling on this.

MR. SPEAKER : Vajpayee ji, your notice is Under Rule 193.

[English]

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : Sir, he has already started.

MR. SPEAKER : That is what I am saying.

[Translation]

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have—a Separate Motion which I have submitted to you. Yesterday also I told you that I would raise the question of propriety This is a separate issue because I want that it should not be discussed on party lines The ruling party is concerned with the Matter of hike in prices but so far as the question of the dignity of the House is concerned, the parties should not be divided on this issue *(Interruptions)*

[English]

MR SPEAKER . Shri Vajpayee has raised a question of propriety. At this stage we are just on the question of propriety

[Translation]

SHRI G.M BANATWALLA (Ponnani) I have also given a notice on the question of propriety If we get a reply only then we will know

MR SPEAKER . No, no before the Minister replies, if you want to speak on this, you can speak

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE (Dumdum) Sir, before that I would like to add that the question of propriety arises not only on the question of hiking the prices but also on the question of providing subsidy on fertilizer It is because all these things affect the Budget Therefore, he has to answer to both these issues. This is a matter of propriety and we do not like to go on criticising the people, as we had been doing previously, who are ruling the country for so long, everytime We want this to be avoided. We want such an answer from the Treasury Benches.

SHRI G.M BANATWALLA (Ponnani) Sir, before the Government replies on the question of propriety the Members must be able to express their feelings

on this important subject and my notice is there before you...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : At this point we are on the question of propriety.

SHRI G.M. BANATWALLA (Ponnani) . Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is very shocking that the new Government that is there has also taken the same course as had been earlier taken by the previous Government with respect to the hikes, the pre-Budget hikes, in the administered prices. This was not expected of them. As has already been explained by the Leader of the Opposition, the Government is responsible for an assault on the sanctity of the Lok Sabha, and also for an assault on the sanctity of the Budget and I am in full agreement with him We, here in this House, have always been raising the question of prerogatives of this House and of the sanctity of this House In the first place, if such important announcements are being made outside the House, then, as I told you, it is an assault on the sanctity of the House. The House had already been convened, the summons had already been issued and skies definitely would not have fallen down if the Government had waited till the time to the House Not only that, this is the Budget session and definitely such a steep hike, such a sudden hike and such a shocking hike in the administered prices renders the Budget exercise meaningless It makes the Budget insignificant.

Sir, if we can realise Rs 10,000 crore through pre-Budget hikes, then, what is the sense of having a Budget? If we have the Budget, if we have the proper parliamentary procedure, then the Government must definitely wait, any Government must definitely wait, for the announcement to be included, if they want, in the Budget so that the full impact of the Budget could be realised The manner in which the sanctity and the significance of the Budget are violated, is a matter of serious concern I must, therefore, appeal to you that the matter should be taken up very seriously by you I don't think there is any need for consulting the Government or listening to the point of view of the Government in this regard The matter is very clear and that is the sanctity of this House and the significance of the Budget are to be upheld Therefore, proper admonition must be administered by you to the Government After your admonition, it would be logical for the Government to withdraw these hikes and come with the Budget at the proper time

I appeal to you to give you views at this juncture itself There is no need for an explanation of the Government An explanation of the Government will be adding insult to the injury The Government must realise that this is a democracy. We are having the Parliamentary procedure and the sanctity of such Parliamentary procedure must be established People are suffering because of this steep hike announced in such a manner. Thank you.

SHRI CHITTA BASU (Barasat) : I am now on a point of propriety and I would make certain appeal to you as you are the Speaker of this House who happens to be I strongly believe - a custodian of the rights and privileges of this House

It is not proper for the Government to announce this kind of a severe price rise only a week before the Parliament commences its Session This is not an ordinary Session of the Parliament to transact ordinary business of the House This is the Session for transacting the financial matter, that is approving the Budget In our economic system, approval of Budget means many things By these ill-advised and ill-devised methods which have been resorted to by the Congress for decades together.

SHRI RAMESH CHENNITHALA (Kottayam) Why don't you correct them? *(Interruptions)*

SHRI CHITTA BASU (Barasat) . Please correct yourself. This is why I have the courage to stand here and raise it from this side of the House You people had no courage Don't become violent *(Interruptions)*

MR SPEAKER Mr Basu, you don't have to look at that side. Kindly look at me

SHRI CHITTA BASU I have seen him as well as many other Members They never had an occasion to raise this question from this side of the House Less they speak, better it is for them

It was not proper for the Government to bring in a measure - that too an executive fiat - which results in steep hike in prices affecting a large number of people, including the toiling millions of our country By these methods, the Government proposes to raise a revenue of above Rs 10,000 crore This means that the Government want to raise the revenue in an indirect way This will affect the budgetary exercise I do not know how this additional revenue will be spent I doubt it may be spent to reduce the deficit financing It is not permissible in the normal Parliamentary procedure

So far as your role in this case is concerned I think you have also a role to play Only for your benefit, I would like to quote a ruling given on 9 6 1980 by your predecessor in this House A question about the propriety, as the Leader of the Opposition has raised today, was raised and the then Speaker observed and I quote

"There was no infringement of rules and

constitutional provisions, but it would have been more appropriates to announce this increase in the House."

Sir, it is for you to decide as to what would be your announcement here. But I say that this is an ill-advised device to mop up additional revenue. In this process the very dignity of the House is affected. This Parliament is sovereign and this Parliament's sovereignty cannot be ignored by any Government that rules the country.

So far as the United Front is concerned, I also remind the leaders of the United Front, particularly those running the Government, that it was the promise that this United Front, of which my Party is a member, *...(Interruptions)...* would provide an alternative model of governance. My question to them, is, "Your promise was to provide an alternative model of governance. This is not an alternative model : this is the model which other practised in this House and you are accepting that model even today." Sir, there is time We should correct ourselves and see if we can really offer an alternative model of governance for the benefit of the people of our country. I submit that you should announce your views on this particular point. Thank you very much

SHRI A C JOS (Idukki) : Sir, he is opposing the Government. Whose Government is this, Sir? He is raising question of propriety on his own Government .. *(Interruptions)*

SHRI SRIBALLAV PANIGRAHI (Deogarh) Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am on this point of propriety. I have also given a notice for a short duration discussion under Rule 193 on this unprecedented and steep hike in the prices of petroleum products

Sir on various occasions in the past this point had been raised and some discussion had taken place on the floor of the House This is not the first time that such a price hike has taken place outside Parliament and on the eve of the Budget Session. Every time this had been raised and there had been some sort of adverse observation from the Chair In spite of this, it is going on, and this time it happened in spite of the fact that the prophets of Parliamentary propriety are sitting there on the first banch, by the side of the Prime Minister Sir I was also to refer to what has been stated on such occasions earlier, by hon Somnath Chatterjee and Shri Indrajit Gupta the Home Minister but it has already been done by the Leader of the Opposition

Sir it is neither illegal nor unconstitutional, but from the point of propriety it is certainly improper and also undemocratic It should not be repeated in future. To add to it, I will bring to the notice of this august House, one of the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Petroleum and Chemicals It is on Page 36 of the Ninth Report of the Committee It reads :

> "The Committee feel that proper estimation should be done well in advance so that there is no need to revise the price of petroleum products too frequently. The Committee accordingly recommend that any revision of prices should be done normally as a part of the Budget."

This, Sir, is a recommendation of he Standing Committee on Petroleum and Chemicals which I had the Fortune of presiding over. I do not know whether these reports are being read by the concerned Minister. I have my doubts as to whether the Concerned Minister even goes through the Reports relating to his own Ministry. Some of them do, but certainly not all.

Sir, I would submit that due regard should be given to the recommendations of all Parliamentary Committees. Thank you

SHRI SURESH PRABHU (Rajpur) Sir, I will be very brief There are various points of propriety on which I will speak first The amount of money to be raised is almost close to Rs 10,000 crore, which is more than many budgets of many State Governments

What is the propriety of having State Legislatures, if such things could be decided outside the Parliament and such decisions could be taken by the Administration? I reserve my right of speaking on it a little later We have given a notice of dissent

We never understood the minimum administered prices and if it means that it could be decided by somebody not even known to the Cabinet then we are very surprised

This is another point of propriety that some Cabinet Ministers are telling on Television that they are opposed to this hike. Now, we just heard that members who are supporting the Government from with in and from outside are also opposing this So I would like to know who is supporting this price rise Everybody seems to be opposing it.

I would also like to raise another point of propriety that those who are supporting the Government also are opposing it, those who are within the Cabinet are also opposing it Who is really supporting it? Is it the Administration? Is there any Minister who is prepared to answer this question? We would like to know who has actually brought about this rise on the eve of the Parliament Session

SHRI S. BANGARAPPA (Shimoga) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have also given a notice of Adjournment Motion on this Subject. But as a perliminary issue, you have permitted us to speak on this and for that the entire House is thankful to you to consider the aspect of propriety or otherwise of the matter relating to the price hike of petroleum products.

Sir, as far as the question of propriety is concerned, I must agree with the Leader of the Opposition and other Members of this House We are also part and parcel of the whole United Front, but we never expected this price hike

Sir, through you, I would like to inform the entire House that even without having consultation with the partners of the United Front if this hike is to be made, then certainly this is going to give an all time impact not only on the price of essential commodities used by a common man but is also going to impair the very system itself

Sir, I do not like to take much time of the House to go into the details of its but the point is that we see a lot of resentment not only from the side of the opposition sitting over here but also well within the United Front I think if the Government conscientiously takes this into account, then what I feel is that better this kind of exercise is taken back No doubt, in the past it has been done as a pre-Budget exercise and something like that, but it is not the correct procedure at all to be adopted If this is to be done, why should we have another thing called 'Budget' to be presented to this august House? What is the necessity? Therefore, to raise a revenue of around Rs 8,000 crore or Rs 9,000 crore that too only from the petroleum products is not correct So, Sir, I appeal to the Government, through you that this is not the type of price hike to be made

Sir, apart from that we feel like giving some of our views on the menace of this price rise and all those things

MR SPEAKER On that we will come later on

SHRI S BANGARAPPA Yes, Sir, we are not on that subject

Sir, while taking into consideration the views of the United Front partners, the apposition parties and the entire House, I appeal to the Government through you that this price hike should be immediately withdrawn paving way for the subject to be discussed along with the Budget proposals that are going to be presented to this House Thank you, Sir.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE Mr Speaker, Sir, I believe, we are now discussing only the question of propriety Therefore, I am not going into the question of reasons for it or justification of it or as to the quantum. That will be discussed later Our Member Shri Basudeb Acharia will speak on that Since my names has also been taken, let it be very clear that so far as the methodology is concerned, certainly I stick to what I have to divulge, there is no question about it. But the answer that used to be given was that this was not a part of the Budget; this was administered price; this was not excise duty and this was not a tax This was the plea that was given Of course, that is so technically, legally and constitutionally But we have always felt that specially when the House was going to sit within a week or eight days, even the announcement of increase in the administered prices should have been made here.

I would like to make one request to the hon Prime Minister and friends who are not in the Government Let them not commit the mistake that was done earlier After all this is also a very vital factor of our economy It impinges on everybody's rights Therefore this announcement of hike, which had a very wide implication and a deep rooted implication, in the sense that it touches everybody's pocket, should have been done in this House specially when the summons of this House had been issued and this course would not give an impression to the people that such a vital matter was done in a hurry.

Well, this country has somehow specialised in midnight activities Some people believe in acting during the Lunch time and the recess and signing documents Some are specialising in natural activities That is the way of functioning, as they do it But, Sir, I hope that this will not be repeated in future The Prime Minister and the Minister whoever speaks will assure the country that this is the last mistake that has been committed Admit the mistake and say that in future at least, this Government, which we all believe will adopt a new type of governance in this country, will neither follow this side nor that side particularly and it will set up a new way of functioning. As we all know, transparency should be the basic tenet of this Government

Therefore, Sir, speaking for ourselves, we express our disapproval, we express our sorrow also and in future, the Government which has raised high expectations among the people, will not do this I know the limitation of a coalition Government There should have been a wider discussion on a matter like this There is a Steering Committee and they could have discussed this among themselves

Therefore, I say, propriety demanded that this should have been done after eight days when the House was sitting.

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE : What I want to supplement to what our leader Shri Chatterjee has said is that this has been done at midnight and with immediate effect, which is neither here nor there. In all such cases it should be with immediate effect so that no one, whether they are the followers of the Opposition Parties or the Treasury Benches, gets a chance to hoard things and then sell them.

The other point that I want to make is that it is not a mere formal propriety. It is not that. I have seen a statement saying that this is independent of the Budget I am referring both to the subsidy on fertilisers as well as the rise in the price of petroleum products Both of them affect the Budget. We remember that in the past, a sum of Rs.4,000 crore from the Oil Pool Account had been taken into the Budget by the former Government. So, when we say that a sum of Rs.9,000 crore will be collected, we know that it can be a source for the Budget also The problem is, there is the dimension of the Budget and we will be misled unless it is placed along with the Budget.

I agree with the hon Member, who spoke from that side—I do not know his name—who says that the size of the hike is also very important. But the question whether there should be a hike or not is an independent question, which we shall debate and find out

[Translation]

PROF. PREM SINGH CHANDUMAJRA (Patiala) : Mr Speaker, Sir, I rise to support the question of propriety raised by the Leader of the Opposition. Due to hike in the prices of petroleum products, an extra burden of rupees ten thousand crore has fallen on the shoulders of the common man. This is a different issue but the dicision of the Government to increase prices of petroleum products, few days before the commencement of the Budget Session, has not only over burdened the common populace but also made mockery of the House It is a great insult of the House It is your responsibility to refrain this Government from doing so

Mr Speaker Sir it is not that the Government has acquired this habit just now but, it is an old one It should be checked and justice should be imparted to the people

[English]

MR SPEAKER : I think it is enough. Enough discussion has taken place Propriety demands that before I give my judgement, I should hear the Members. So I have heard.

SHRI ANANTH KUMAR (Bangalore South) : Hon. Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister had worked many years, before, during and after the Emergency in Karnataka as Leader of the Opposition and many times, when there was a rise in administered prices in the country before the Union Budget was presented, he, as the Leader of the Opposition of Karnataka, had opposed the same thing. We are dismayed. The entire country is dismayed that the very person, who has now become the hon. Prime Minister, has raised the prices of petroleum, gas and diesel to the tune of Rs.10,000 crore, flouting the sanctity and the entire exercise of the Budget Session. Therefore, I request you to admonish this government and undo the rise of the petroleum prices.

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE (Panskura) : Hon Speaker, Sir, from the point of view of propriety, I also think that whichever Government rules, before the Budget is presented, administered prices should not be raised. I am happy at least on one question, since a new situation has developed, the coalition Government has come. So coalition Government's function is to consult each other. After the first act, the other partners also took objection to it. There was a good discussion. That was quite correct and the earlier one was incorrect If the latter practice was taken up earlier, probably this incorrect step could have been avoided and in the Budget, therefore, as to how to re-plan both resources as well as expenditure could have been discussed So from that point of view, Sir, I also think it is not proper.

[Translation]

SHRI NITISH KUMAR (Barh) Mr Speaker Sir, discussion is going on over the propriety of increasing prices of the petroleum product before the commencement of the Budget session I had been listening to every one's speech with due attention A strange situation has development The question of propriety of the Parliament and functioning of the Government has been raised Though it is United Front's Government but I fail to understand as to whose government it is after all Shri Somnath Chatterjee is one of those who have elected Shri Devegauda as Prime Minister. Now Shri Indrajit Gupta is also in the Government. Shrimati Geeta Mukherjee is a member of his party Shri Chitta Basu is also a member of United Front Now the question of propriety on hiking prices before the commencement of the session of Parliament has also been raised The question of propriety of functioning of United

Front Government is also being raised. They should take to you about that. I am not able to understand as to how the United Front Government is functioning. Just now a member of Congress Party has been on Dharna.

MR. SPEAKER : Why are you shetching the things?

SHRI NITISH KUMAR : First, I may be listened Sir. Kumari Mamata Banerjee has sat on Dharana Shri Sontosh Mohan Dev may say something ...*(Interruptions)* The position of Congress Party is also very strange

[English]

They want to enjoy the privilege of the Ruling Party and at the same time the prestige of the Opposition Party

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV (Silchar) We are not in the Front This is a wrong statement that is made.

[Translation]

MR SPEAKER Is it also a question of propriety?

(Interruptions)

SHRI NITISH KUMAR They are all allies of the United Front's Government but are raising this question on the floor of the House They are supporting United Front's Government but are sitting in the well of the House in protest It is also a question of propriety which requires your ruling Please give them some piece of advice on these issues They have come to run the Government You are requested to arrange for some Orientation Course for running a Government

[English]

SHRI MANORANJAN BHAKTA (A & N Islands) Mr Speaker, Sir, I am happy that the hon Leader of the Opposition has raised the question of propriety and today in the context of the country's present position we cannot look at the question of propriety in an isolated manner, because when he was the Prime Minister, at that time, before the Confidence Motion was taken up, his Cabinet had cleared the Enron Project That was also a question of propriety ad it should be dealt with properly It should not be done in a piecemeal manner and then only I think that in the coming days this sort of question will not come

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P CHIDAMBARAM) Sir, let me assure the hon Members that the Point raised by them is well taken. Surely, there is no quarrel that ordinarily administrative decisions which have far-reaching consequences ought not to be taken on the eve of a Parliament Session. I accept that. *(Interruptions)* I am sure that my colleagues would also insist that, ordinarily the decisions with such far-reaching consequences to the people ought not to be taken on the eve of a Parliament Session. The position in law is quite clear There is no breach of privilege, there is no contempt, there is no violation of the Constitution and there is no violation of law. It boils down to propriety. *(Interruptions)*

I am answering It boils down to propriety

Sir, a Government which is in position for a period of time — a reasonable period of time, say six months or a year — presents a Budget, gets its financial statements approved, and its policies stated a Government which has a complete mastery over the economic situation can surely plan to take decisions such that it does not offend any one's sense of propriety As my friend Shri Manoranjan Bhakta just point out, there was in this House a Government which felt — and I am sure quite rightly because I know the men whose took that decision are honourable men who felt quite rightly — that an administrative decision was imperative on a particular day, at a particular hour if another State Government had to be saved a tremendous financial burden That decision was taken by a Government By the standard that is being applied today that decision was also an improper decision but no one question the motive of that decision *(Interruptions)*

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE Even that was done without any majority

SHRI P CHIDAMBARAM Therefore, I would urge upon the hon Members and particularly those of the Opposition to kindly understand the background in which this decision was taken I may admit to some failure on my part Even today, the hon Leader of the Opposition, so seasoned a politician and administrator, believes that administered prices of petroleum products have something to do with the Budget Even my good friend Shri Chitta Basu — I think — and Shri Chatterjee think that it has something to do with the Budget It has nothing to do with the Budget

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE Please say Shri Nirmal Kanti Chatterjee *(Interruptions)*

SHRI P CHIDAMBARAM I am answering It has nothing to do with the Budget The Oil Pool Account is a self-balancing account maintained on behalf of the oil companies and administered by the Ministry of Petroleum It can run into a surplus, it can run into

a deficit. There was a time in 1993-94 when the account ran into a surplus...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI JASWANT SINGH (Chittorgarh) : Just one minute

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM : Jaswant Singh ji, I will yield later on. Let me just complete this point ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI JASWANT SINGH : The factual information of surplus in such matters ..*(Interruptions)*. If you kindly yield, I shall make a point.

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM : Let me complete this sentence at least

SHRI JASWANT SINGH . I shall speak after this sentence.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : Make it a long one!

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM : Sir, the Surplus Account can run into a Deficit Account Where it ran into a surplus in a particular year, what Shri Nirmal Kanti Chatterjee mentioned, did take place There was a borrowing by the Public Account.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH : Exactly that

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM That is why I said that if I complete the sentence, your intervention may not be necessary. The point today is, are we taking any money from the Account to the Budget or are we giving money from the Budget to the Account? The answer to both is 'no' This is a self-balancing Account It ran into a deficit of Rs. 6,200 crore on the day Shri Jaswant Singh assumed Office. It ran into a deficit of Rs 7,200 crore by 31st March 1997 All these things will out when my distinguished colleague, the Minister of Petroleum replies to the merits of the debate But the point is that a Government which assumed Office on 1st June and which won the Vote of Confidence on the 12th of June was faced with an extraordinary situation

SHRI JASWANT SINGH That is exactly what we want to know

DR MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI (Allahabad) It is precisely this extraordinary situation we want to know about

SHRI P CHIDAMBARAM All that will come under the merits I am answering on the question of propriety

SHRI JASWANT SINGH We want to know precisely about this extraordinary situation

SHRI P CHIDAMBARAM That will come under the merits It has nothing to do with propriety *(Interruptions)*

SHRI JASWANT SINGH I hope he has completed his sentence...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : This is breach of propriety.

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM : I am not yielding now. In such an extraordinary situation we had to take a decision in order to ensure that oil was imported and supplies were not disrupted. That decision was taken after the most careful consideration and after all the points of view were considered in the Cabinet.

Sir, a reference was made to the announcement of increase in subsidies. That comes out of the Budget and yet nobody criticises that as a decision which is lacking in propriety. Administrative decision have to be taken. A Government does not stop functioning when Parliament in not in Session, a Government cannot stop functioning in what is now being described as a twilight period leading to Parliament Session. Ordinarily I would agree that we should plan our Government affairs in such a manner that these decisions are not taken in the ten or fifteen days leading to Parliament session. But that is a question and criticism you should address to us if after this session and before the next session, we take any decision of that kind We had to take these decisions It was a new Government and it was faced with an extraordinary situation. It, therefore, had to take a decision to save that situation

Sir, I would most humbly submit and urge the hon. Members that let us move on to the merits of the debate and, I am sure, in the merits of the debate, some people will have their view that we were wrong; some will say that we were right. Let us move on to the merits of the debate But I would most humbly submit that this Government took a decision *bona fide*, this Government had to take a decision faced with an extraordinary situation .*(Interruptions)* There was no lack of propriety

DR MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI You are just repeating every time about the extraordinary situation. What is that extraordinary situation?

SHRI P CHIDAMBARAM That will come in the merits of the debate

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN (Mumbai North East) If you take the position of 31st March, 1997, what would be your revenue loss between 2nd of July 1996 and 10th of July, 1996.. *(Interruptions)*

SHRI P CHIDAMBARAM All these facts will be brought out Shri Pramod Mahajan may kindly sit I am not yeilding .*(Interruptions)* I am sorry, I am not yielding .*(Interruptions)* I apologise but I am not yielding . *(Interruptions)*

DR MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI You are not yielding But I am just requesting you to answer the main question

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM : I am not yielding ...*(Interruptions)*. I am not yielding. It will come in the debate.

MR SPEAKER : Mr. Joshi, he is not yielding.

(Interruptions)

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM . I am not yielding Sir, we are now debating the question of propriety There is no lack of propriety. Administrative decisions have to be taken like the decisions taken by the Government on the eve of its Confidence Vote. Like the decision to announce subsidies, like decisions announced by the Prime Minister in the Chief Ministers' Conference Decisions have to be taken These decisions cannot be postponed and when decisions are taken we feel as strongly as you do that ordinarily we should do these things differently But in an extraordinary situation these decisions have to be taken .*(Interruptions)*

Sir, I would suggest that we may go on to the debate *(Interruptions)*

DR MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI We want to know what is that extraordinary situation

SHRI P CHIDAMBARAM That will come in the debate

DR MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI The only important question of propriety is *(Interruptions)*

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN It was a question of only one week What was that extraordinary situation? We want to know it *(Interruptions)*

DR MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI If you cannot tell some of your colleagues will tell

SHRI P CHIDAMBARAM It will come in the debate

DR MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI Why are you intervening then?

SHRI P CHIDAMBARAM I am intervening on the question of propriety

DR MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI You have not explained the question of propriety either

SHRI P CHIDAMBARAM I cannot satisfy you

DR MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI You are saying about the extraordinary situation *(Interruptions)*

SHRI P CHIDAMBARAM I can only intervene I cannot satisfy you *(Interruptions)*

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE Sir, you please give your ruling.

SHRI I.D SWAMI (Karnal) Sir, propriety also includes sensitivity When this Government could reduce the increase in diesel price by 15 per cent, when the whole House is almost unanimous that the hike in petrol was big or unprecedently high, they should withdraw it. Why can they not respect the sentiments of the people? They should withdraw the whole thing ..*(Interruptions)*

12.57 hrs.

OBSERVATION BY SPEAKER

MR SPEAKER Well, hon Member, I think we have discussed enough today In fact, this issue had been discussed on the floor of the House many times in the past. I have many number of precedents available before me here On 9th June, 1980 the question was raised by the Leader of the Opposition Shri Vajpayee Even in 1980 hon Members raised what he has referred to in his speech The hon Members also have referred to the debate on 16th February when this issue was raised by Prof Madhu Dandavate The issue was discussed not only in this Hose but in the Upper House also as we have any number of ruling

I think, I will go to the ruling of 1980 by the then Speaker Dr Balram Jakhar He said and I quote

> "There is no infringement of rules and constitutional provisions, but it would have been more appropriate to announce this increase in the House"

That is the ruling which has been given by my distinguished predecessor Dr Balram Jakhar The Finance Minister has almost agreed to this point when he said that ordinarily it should not be done and we should avoid doing it and that the point was well taken That is what the Government have mentioned today I would reiterate the ruling given by my predecessor that though there is no question of infringement of rules or the constitutional provisions. I think Government of rules or the constitutional provisions. I think Government should always keep in mind the question of propriety the question of the feelings which have been expressed in the House again and again On this point there seems to be near unanimity in the whole House that when Parliament is in session or when Parliament has been summoned, Government should not ordinarily take a policy decision I think this should be kept in mind by the Government in future

Now we will take up the matter of Adjournment Motion

(Interruptions)

SHRI JASWANT SINGH Sir, one minute please

MR SPEAKER Just a minute I have many number of notices under Rule 56

(Interruptions)